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Second Consolidated Report on the Interrogation of Ps/W /
captured in the first stage of the present German Offensive.

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(This report was prepared by PWD, SHAEF Interrogators)

PWE # 15, 28 December 1944.

1. In all this report covers the interrogation of 22 Ps/W captured between the dates of December 16th-19th; of these 15 were captured in the northern sector of the offensive, 2 in the Luxemburg Sector, and 5 in other sectors not involved in the offensive.

2. Characteristics of the Ps/W Unit: 6 Ps/W belonged to the Kampfgruppe Von der Heyde (Paratroopers, see first Consolidated Report), 3 to the Leibstandarte Adolf Hitler, 3 to the 272nd Volksgrenadier Div., 3 to the 47th Volksgrenadier Div., 2 to the 326th Volksgrenadier Div. and one from each of the following units: 277th Volksgrenadier Div., 352nd Volksgrenadier Div., 12th SS Panzer Grenadier Div. (Hitler Jugend), 343rd Volksgrenadier Div., 17th Inf. Div.

<u>Age and Background:</u>	Age Group	17-21	14 Ps/W
	22-30	6	"
	30-38	2	"

20 of the Ps/W were Reichsdeutsche, 1 from Austria, 1 from Luxemburg; 7 of the Ps/W have been members of the Wehrmacht 6 months or less, 5 out of the 22 Ps/W were NCOs.

3. General Impressions: The members of the Parachute unit had excellent morale in every respect. Members of the SS vary between fanatics and average soldiers. This group of SS men displayed a very low level of intelligence. The rest of the Ps/W (largely from Volksgrenadier units) do not differ strikingly from the Ps/W encountered during the last few months.

4. Western Offensive:

a) Briefing and knowledge of offensive: 2 men, both members of Volksgrenadier Divisions, received an official reading at formation on December 16th of von Rundstedt's Special Order. In addition to this, 9 Ps/W had some knowledge of an offensive which had been conveyed to them by their Company or Platoon COs.

1 P/W, captured on December 16th, had been informed of a Special Order, announcing the capture of Liège. 2 Ps/W, from two different Volksgrenadier Divisions, stated that they had been informally told Hitler had guaranteed air superiority over the battle area for a period of three months. The briefing for the offensive was given in the following general terms: "Wir brechen durch bis Paris." (We break right through to Paris.) Obersturmfuehrer Preuss, 10th Co., 10th Regt., Leibstandarte Adolf Hitler. "Wir muessen es schaffen und werden es auch schaffen." (We must do it and we shall do it.) "Zwischen 2 und 4 Uhr heute nacht passiert was. Der grosse Angriff an der Westfront faengt an." (Something is going to happen between 2 and 4 a.m. tonight. The big attack on the Westfront is imminent.) Company CO of the 5th Co., 916th Regt., 352nd Volksgrenadier Div. "Diesmal haben wir Luftdeckung und genuegend Arie. Es ist kein Zweifel, dass wir die Englaender und Amerikaner aus Frankreich und Belgien raustreiben." (This time we have air cover and sufficient artillery. There is no doubt, we shall chase the English and Americans out of France and Belgium.) Company CO 1st Bn. 15th Pz. Regt. Leibstandarte Adolf Hitler. "Die Offensive war so geheim, dass man den Flugzeugfuhrern nicht einmal gesagt hat, wo sie uns absetzen sollen?" sarcastically. (The offensive was kept such a secret that the pilots were not even told where to drop us.) Feldwebel Kampfgruppe Von der Heyde. One paratrooper of the Von der Heyde Combat Team states: "Es wurde uns in der letzten Minute noch gesagt, es ist ein Uebungssprung vor den Reichsmarschall und nachher bekommen wir alle Weihnachtsurlaub." (We were told the last minute that this was supposed to be a practice jump for the Reichsmarschall and that afterwards we would all get Christmas leave.)

Besides briefing there were many rumours going around amongst the men, such as: "Aachen soll das Weihnachtsgeschenk fuer den Fuehrer sein." (Aachen is to be the Christmas present for the Fuehrer.) "Wir werden Cherbourg und die anderen Haefen wieder erobern." (We shall recapture Cherbourg and the other ports.) "Die Amerikaner werden bis zum Frueshjahr in den Kanal geworfen werden." (Before spring the Americans will all be in the Channel.)

One man who had not received any briefing states: "Wir sind die ganze Nacht vom 17. zum 18. hin-und hermarschiert, wussten garnicht, was es bedeutet und was der Sinn und Zweck war." (All night from the 17th to the 18th we had been marching up and down, neither of us knew what it all meant and what its purpose was.) Another one states: "Ich wusste nicht, ob wir angreifen oder davonlaufen." (I didn't know whether we attacked or ran away.)

The 5 Ps/W captured in the Dueren-Geilenkirchen Sector did not have any direct knowledge of the offensive. However, two of them were told in the afternoon of December 16th: "Haltet aus, die naechsten 12 Stunden werden entscheidend fuer unsere Kriegsfuehrung sein." (Hold out, the next 12 hours will be decisive for us.)

b) Training: No evidence of any special training or manoeuvres for this offensive were reported by these Ps/W. Several Ps/W profess that they were thrown into battles with hardly any, or else very superficial, training. Examples: One 17 years old P/W was inducted into the SS end of September, had absolutely no training, but was immediately sent to the front lines with the Leibstandarte Adolf Hitler. Another P/W, a paratrooper of the Von der Heyde Combat Team, stated that he had been transferred to the paratroopers end of October and that he had only received 8 days of training, without ever getting an opportunity to jump. His first jump was the one in action. He further stated that their objective was to cut off a crossroad which they had been shown previously on a map. After his landing he did not have the slightest idea of his whereabouts. "Weder kannte ich mich auf der Landkarte aus, noch wusste ich, wo ich war. Ausserdem hatte man auch vergessen, uns Kompassse zu geben." (Neither could I read the map nor did I know where I was. Also, they had forgotten to give us a compass.) Unteroffizier Johannes Koechling, Von der Heyde Combat Team. A P/W who had been with ground personnel of the Luftwaffe since 1940, was transferred to the Engineers in August 1944. The special training for the engineers lasted 3 1/2 weeks and about its efficiency the P/W has the following to say: "Es gab eine Stunde das und eine Stunde das, es ging hier herein und da heraus." (We were taught something else every hour. It went in at one ear and out at the other.) Obergefreiter Johannes Schneiderhan, 326th Volksgrenadier Div. (Eric Ober, paratrooper, 326th Volksgrenadier Div.) states: "Man wird auf Kommando, der Kurs nach 2-4 Uhr vor uns nach Holstunadiner Feuerverleibung losbruech, ist blutig liegendeblut. Wir hatten keine Erfahrung mit diesen neuen Waffen. Ich habe meine Maschinen

Div.) Another P/W (Erich Weber, Grenadier, 326th Volksgrenadier Div.) states: "Unser Angriff auf Hoefen, der kurz nach 3 Uhr morgens nach halbstuendiger Feuervorbereitung losbrach, ist blutig liegengeblieben. Wir hatten wenig Erfahrung mit unseren automatischen Waffen. Ich habe meine Maschinenpistole vorher nur zweimal auf dem Übungsplatz abgefeuert." (Our attack on Hoefen which, after half an hour's preparation, had started shortly after 3 o'clock in the morning, broke down completely. We had little experience with our automatic weapons. I had fired my machine gun only twice before on the drill ground.)— Obergefreiter Rolf Fischer of the 277th Volksgrenadier Div. states: "Sogar im Frontgebiet mussten wir exerzieren. Wir mussten auch alle Offiziere und Unteroffiziere gruessen, 4 Schritte vorher, und 2 Schritte nachher. Der Kompanie Chef, Lt. Hafner, sagte: 'Ich lasse jeden Unteroffizier bestrafen, der sich nicht gruessen laesst.'" (Even at the front we had to drill. We had to salute all officers and NCOs too, 4 steps before the salute and 2 steps after. The Company Commander said: 'I shall have every NCO punished who does not make the men salute him'))

c) Weapons: There is great enthusiasm amongst the members of the Volksgrenadier Divisions about their weapons, especially about the quantity and quality of the new "Maschinen Pistole 44". Contrary to the Ps/W from the Volksgrenadier Divisions in the Dueren Sector, who were still equipped with the "Karabiner 98 K", those divisions that took part in the offensive seemed to have been equipped with the semi-automatic rifle (Selbstladegewehr). One P/W of the 5th Co., 352nd Volksgrenadier Division stated that every squad in his company had one machine gun, and every man in the company a "Maschinenpistole" and a "Panzerfaust". Every man had seen V-weapons being shot over the lines which they could easily distinguish at night. One man also reports having seen an unidentified shiny object go up straight into the air, but nobody knew what it was.

d) Food: It seems that there was a general lack of food among the units mentioned in this report. Examples: "Wir haben 5 Tage nichts zu essen gehabt, nur was die Amerikaner zurueckgelassen haben. Sie koennen sich daher denken, wie die Kampfmoral war." (For 5 days we haven't had anything to eat except what the Americans had left behind. You will imagine what our fighting spirits were like.) Obergefreiter Rolf Fischer, 277th Volksgrenadier Div. — "Seit Beginn der Offensive haben wir kaum etwas zu essen bekommen." (Since the offensive started we have hardly had anything to eat.) Grenadier Paul Schneider, 12th Waffen SS Div, Hitler Jugend. — "Ich weiss nicht, woran das gelegen hat, aber die letzten 5 Tage hatten wir nichts als unsere eiserne Ration." (I don't know what was wrong, but the last 5 days we had nothing but our iron ration.) Sturmann Just Klein, 15th Pz Regt, Leibstandarte Adolf Hitler. — "Wir sind schliesslich keine Russen, die tagelang ohne Frass kaempfen koennen." (After all, we are no Russians who can fight for days without any grub.) Feldwebel Alois Kilian, Combat Team Von der Heyde. — "Wir bekamen Verpflegung fuer 3 Tage. Am dritten Tag fing der Angriff an und wir hatten nichts mehr zu essen." (We had been given food for 3 days. Then the attack started and we had nothing more to eat.) Grenadier Siegfried Zeddel, Leibstandarte Adolf Hitler. Another interesting incident, although dating back 10 weeks, is reported by Grenadier Heinrich Altmann, 47th Volksgrenadier Division: "Als wir vor Merode lagen (vicinity of Dueren) hatten wir 5 Tage lang nichts zu fressen. 45 Mann vom Pionier Zug von 60 Mann sind ueber gelaufen. Flugblaetter haben auch dazu geholfen.)When we were lying outside Merode (vicinity of Dueren), we had nothing to eat for 5 days. 45 men out of 60 from the Pioneer Bn ran over to your lines, encouraged by your leaflets. —Leaflets with 6 points on American treatment of Ps/W.)

e) Fear of Capture: There is no evidence that Ps/W knew anything about the shooting of American Ps/W by German tank crews; consequently their attitude towards captivity did not differ from that of Ps/W captured in previous months. Obergefreiter Rolf Fischer of the 277th Volksgrenadier Division states: "Ich habe viele gesprochen, die ausgetauscht waren. Sie waren alle wuetend ueber den Austausch, denn es ging ihnen allen gut in amerikanischer Gefangenschaft und sie waren aus der Scheisse raus." (I have spoken to many who had been exchanged. They were all furious about it as they had nothing to worry about in American captivity and had been glad to be out of the muck.)

f) Germans in US Uniforms: All Ps/W denied any knowledge of the use of US uniforms by German troops, at least before captivity. Some heard about it

ones.) "Es hat einen erzieherischen Wert(the Volkssturm), denn das Gemeinschafts Gefuehl wird gestaerkt."(The Volkssturm has an educational value -- it furthers group solidarity.)

7. Allied Occupation of German Territory: The majority of the Ps/W think that the Germans under Allied occupation do not fare badly.

8. Political Attitude: "Der ganze Staat wird nur noch mit Lug und Trug zusammengehalten."(The state machine is only kept together by falsehood and deceit.) "Hitler ist gut, es sind die kleinen Ortsgruppenleiter, die es versauen, die wollen kleine Hitler sein."(Hitler is alright, it's the district leaders who mess up everything. Everyone of them likes to be a little Hitler himself.) "Ob Hitler oder Himmler die Macht hat, macht fuer uns keinen Unterschied. Schliesslich geht es um Deutschland, und beide wollen fuer Deutschland das Beste." (Whether Hitler or Himmler has the power doesn't make any difference to us. After all, it's Germany that matters and both want to do the best they can for Germany.) "Der schwarze Heinrich ist ungeheuer radikal, man weiss aber eigentlich nicht viel von ihm, weil er bis zum 20. Juli nie in den Vordergrund getreten ist."(The Black Henry is frightfully radical. However, one doesn't really know very much about him as prior to July 20th he did not seem to be much in the limelight.) "Wenn Greuelthaten vorgekommen sind, so war das unter den Militaers. Jetzt, wo Himmler die Sache ganz in der Hand hat, ist sowas ganz ausgeschlossen. Nach dem Kriege werden die Schuldigen bestraft, besonders im Falle eines deutschen Sieges wird der Fuehrer darauf sehen."(If there were atrocities, they happened under the military. Now, that ~~Hitler is in~~ control, this is quite out of the question. The guilty will be punished after the war, especially if Germany wins, the Fuehrer will see to that.) "Hitler ist das Schicksal des deutschen Volkes, mit ihm fallen wir oder stehen wir."(Hitler's fate is closely tied up with that of the German people; with him we die or live.

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